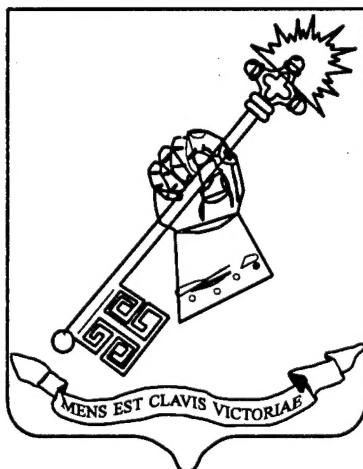


STANDING AT THE GATES OF THE CITY: OPERATIONAL LEVEL ACTIONS AND URBAN WARFARE

A Monograph
by
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Infantry



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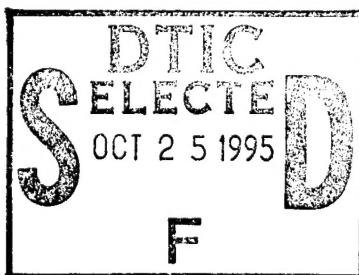
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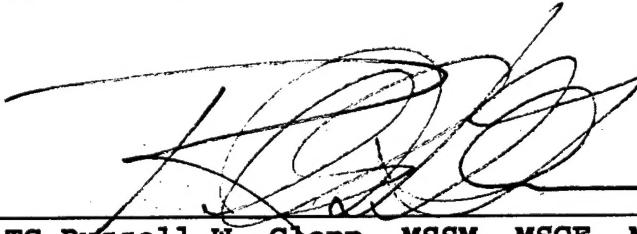
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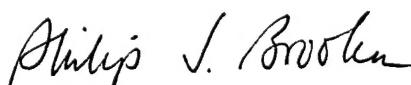
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ABSTRACT

STANDING AT THE GATES OF THE CITY: OPERATIONAL LEVEL ACTIONS AND URBAN WARFARE by MAJ Robert E. Everson, USA, 43 pages.

The studies on modern urban warfare are preoccupied with the tactical problems associated with urban combat. Since World War II, conflicts in the urban environment have given modern armies complex problems which seem insurmountable. The tactical level emphasis attempts to circumvent the cost in time and resources normally associated with urban warfare.

The operational commander who has responsibility for campaign planning and execution has considerable influence on the outcome of tactical urban combat. An assessment by the operational commander should clarify how a potential enemy may use urban terrain and what forces the enemy has to meet their objectives. When this evaluation is coupled with U.S. operational objectives, the importance of urban areas is evident.

The six operational operating systems provide a good method for analyzing the major operation which will include urban combat. The operating systems have a synergistic effect on operational level warfare and their interaction has played an important part in tactical urban combat.

The U.S. military has had numerous successes and failures in urban combat. Three such case studies are evaluated in this analysis. The operational level conditions established prior to tactical urban combat either facilitated or hampered tactical unit actions in each.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of urban warfare has focused predominantly on the tactical complexities of combat on urban terrain. The decision to conduct combat in an urban area is generally considered a necessary evil and an extremely undesirable course of action for military commanders. Urban fighting is regarded as combat of last resort.

Current U.S. Army doctrinal manuals list numerous considerations for conducting offensive and defensive operations in urban terrain; however, these manuals lump operational and tactical problems together. The joint operational level perspective is possibly a better way to address these problems. The decisions an operational commander must make ahead of and during tactical urban combat could effectively determine the course of the tactical action. One of the objectives of this study will be to establish an understanding of the operational level framework which facilitates tactical urban combat.

This study will examine the relationship between the operational and tactical levels of war and consequently explore their relationship to urban combat. Studies of military operations in urban terrain have considered the strategic importance and implications of fighting in and around cities; however, almost all of the articles written on the subject have focused on the tactical level of war. Almost no studies have considered the concerns for urban warfare and the operational level of war.

This great emphasis on the complicated tactical problems of urban warfare may be the cause of military commander and planner myopia. The foundation for successful tactical urban actions could very well exist in operational level actions. Possible courses of action selected at the operational level of war may be instrumental in establishing the conditions for success at the tactical level. These actions or events could reduce the uncertainty for the commander preparing to conduct tactical operations in urban terrain. A full understanding of the interaction of the operational and tactical level of war in urban warfare will come from the review of historical examples.

The analysis of three historical examples provides insight into the similarities and differences in procedures at the operational level of war and whether or not there is a consistency in procedures which established conditions for success or failure. The three examples span the levels of intensity in war. The 1951 battle of Seoul is the historical example which illustrates urban combat in conventional war in which the city was the objective of the battle. The struggle to control Mogadishu in 1993 is an example from the low end of the conflict spectrum, Operations Other Than War (OOTW). The objective was to control the city and its population, but military action was severely constrained. The fight 1991 for Panama City has aspects of both conventional war and OOTW.

This study concentrates on the operational level procedures in general war thru OOTW which reinforce circumstances that proceed success or failure at the tactical level. The viewpoint taken is that of the contingents which are conducting the operational and tactical offensive operations with a joint emphasis at the operational level. This perspective will remain a dilemma for the U.S. Army because of the potential for future urban conflict within a power projection national strategy.

U.S. joint doctrine for the operational level of war includes six systems or functions. These are operational maneuver, operational fires, operational intelligence, operational support, operational command and control and finally, operational protection. Each of the above components or operating systems may or may not play a significant part in establishing conditions for success in tactical level urban combat. The concept of battlespace will facilitate determining the connections between operational and tactical actions with regard to combat operations in and around cities. There is a conscious effort to review historical battles which involve conventional war and range to OOTW to uncover any possible consistencies between war intensity and operational actions for urban warfare. There should exist some link between tactical battles and operational designs within each type of conflict.

Inherent in the operational level of war are planning requirements to synchronize joint forces using the six operational functions as a guide. The link between the operational level preparation of the urban battlefield and the tactical level execution in such terrain is unclear. In the joint arena, the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps cover the tactical problems of urban warfare in great detail.

The primary question is, what are the considerations for an operational level commander before and during tactical level combat in urban areas? Secondary questions are: What decisions by the operational commander affect tactical level combat actions? What actions at the operational level appear essential for success at the tactical level? Do one or more of the six operational functions have a greater influence on successful tactical urban operations? What operational level conditions precede tactical failure? Are operational actions that are successful in general war also applicable to Operations Other Than War where urban warfare is concerned?

The aspect which makes urban combat one of the most difficult of battlefield environments for tactical combat is that the urban area possesses a unique, three-dimensional quality replicated in no other combat situation. These qualities affect operational warfighting, but in a broader manner. The three dimensions include large, multi-floored buildings, each different from one another in structure and composition. Natural terrain features, such as hills,

ridges and valleys, further complicate the environment. Other manmade structures like sewage systems and subsurface transportation systems further challenge the military planner. This three dimensional quality exists without consideration of aviation assets.

Urban warfare provides both operational and tactical level commanders with a predicament. Operations in urban areas consume an inordinate amount of resources and time in comparison to combat in any other environment. The likely immense expenditure of time and resources is directly opposed to the U.S. Army's stated preference for quick, decisive victory. There is an additional risk of early culmination of the attack due to the harsh conditions inherent in urban fighting.

Tactical urban combat creates a battlefield in which most engagements are fought to the bitter end. Units making contact collide with the enemy in close quarters and opponents can easily become decisively engaged. One or both sides quickly loses its ability to maneuver. Operational planning for urban warfare has to consider that combat units have a high probability of being used only once before major reorganization or reconstitution must occur. The U.S. Army is not prepared to conduct offensive operational and tactical level operations in urban terrain during a conventional war. More importantly, the army is not prepared to pay the price for this type of combat.

An operational commander in urban terrain also has another problem that is usually associated with city fighting. A portion of the civilian population in a city is caught by the fighting. Noncombatants may or may not know of an impending fight for their city. Many times the population is not warned of a pending battle by either side because of security reasons. A large portion may leave prior to an engagement; however, a city will always have civilians who were either unable or unwilling to leave. The subsequent battle will take a grim toll of those remaining. The operational commander must weigh the potential cost in human suffering against mission accomplishment.

OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR AND URBAN COMBAT

Theories on Urban Warfare

The study of urban warfare does not have a distinct theoretical base in modern warfare theory. The two most influential theorists on modern warfare are arguably Generals Carl von Clausewitz and Henri Jomini, yet neither of them comments on urban combat. There are numerous reasons for this. The large national armies during the Napoleonic wars required roads as lines of communication (LOC); extensive urban areas did not exist to control key points on routes through a region. Although fortresses were in abundance, they did not occupy large areas; their reductions were time and resource consuming projects, and they were eventually captured through siege warfare if there

was sufficient time available. Operational or strategic objectives were often not dependent on the seizure of a city.

Though Clausewitz does not cover battles in cities; he provides theories of battle on other types of terrain which are applicable to modern urban terrain.¹ The absence of theory on city fighting is probably due to the emphasis on classical warfare in which the enemy's army was usually considered as the focus of all actions. Cities were not immense gatherings of civilian populations, coupled with major industries and national treasury, a phenomenon which transpired after the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Clausewitz stated that terrain has specific affects on military operations. "Geography and ground can effect military operations in three ways: as an obstacle to the approach, as an impediment to visibility, and as cover from fire."² He states how certain types of terrain, e.g., forests and mountains, have at least two of these qualities, but generally not all three. When urban terrain is viewed with regard to these aspects, it clearly accommodates all three of the terrain effects. These qualities show there is a connection to theory that illustrates the difficulties of urban terrain.

In Clausewitz's discussion of defensive positions, he makes the general assertion, "one thing is sure and fundamental to the issue: it is risky business to attack an able opponent in a good position."³ Clausewitz further

states that the defense is the stronger form of warfare.⁴ The implications of this statement are compounded when applied to modern urban combat. Urban warfare has the potential to cause the early culmination of the attack and an extension of the defense's culmination. The U.S. Army acknowledges that the restrictive nature of operations in large urban areas requires a higher density of troops and smaller defensive sectors than in open terrain to facilitate a successful defense.⁵ The U.S. Army further states that a successful offense in urban terrain requires many more troops than in other combat situations. Synchronization is key to urban offensives but is much more difficult because of the restrictive terrain. The attacking force must reduce its frontage to add depth and power. Simultaneously, units from squad to division are virtually isolated from one another while they conduct their attacks.⁶

The concepts of offense and defense in urban warfare merely describe temporary states in tactical combat. Although one side may defend and another attack at the operational or strategic level, tactical combat involves rapid transitions from one form to the other. Each side fighting in urban terrain realizes the transitory nature of the battles and strives to use the techniques which allow them to switch forms. When both defender and attacker possess the knowledge of what procedures they must follow to win the tactical urban fight then the engagement often becomes an issue of available resources. Urban combat has a

huge potential for a battle that simply tests which side possesses the most brute strength.

Urban combat is a post-Industrial Revolution phenomenon. Modern cities represent a significant portion of a country's wealth and most populations now reside therein because of the economic benefits. These cities are often strategically important transportation and communications hubs as well as crucial political and cultural centers. Consequently, they have gained an increased significance in modern combat.

The industrial age has facilitated the advent of modern rapid firing weapons with increased lethality and range. This has given rise to the empty battlefield theory for modern combat. Armies had to conduct tactical combat at close range prior to the appearance of modern weapons. Ancient and medieval combats were generally decided with edged weapons and pikes. Soldiers so armed were not overly concerned about fighting in cities because of the need to close with each other regardless of the environment. Early firearms still required soldiers to close to point blank range before weapons effectiveness could be realized. Modern armies train to fight at increased ranges and are not prepared to conduct combat at extremely close quarters.

An enemy controlling a modern urban area potentially has the ability to dictate the conduct of a campaign.

Ashworth observes: "How cities were used in military operations was dependent not only upon the intrinsic

characteristics of the cities themselves but also upon the nature of the chosen defense strategy and policy."⁷ Cities offer the exchange of good defensive terrain for poor command and control. Cities are also attractive to armies with poor mobility and unsophisticated but effective short range weapons. Ashworth further states, "Protagonists of a strategy of mobile warfare will have little use for cities as battlefields,"⁸ while positional strategists are inclined to fight in cities because of a perception of enhanced survival. Simply stated, a determined, low-technology, foot-mobile army can establish symmetry with a high-technology, mobile army by selecting a large city as the battleground.

A recent example of this principle is the Chechnian revolt against Russian rule. Chechnian irregular forces chose to defy Russian control by making the Russians fight for the Chechnian capital city of Grozny. The irregular force barricaded the entrances into the city and prepared an elaborate defensive network. The Russians failed early in the battle because they underestimated the capabilities of their opponents in an urban environment. Subsequent international criticism forced the Russian government to seek a quick military resolution to the problem. The Russian Army adopted a more violent and aggressive operation using larger forces with heavier weapons systems. Continued failure by the Russians compelled them to adopt the tactical techniques they had used in World War II. The tactics used

by the Russians were firepower intensive and destroyed immense portions of the city while killing many of its noncombatant inhabitants. The Russians eventually crushed the rebellion in the city, but the cost was world respect. The Chechnian strategy established the role of the city in the conflict. Ashworth concludes, "This in itself is not as surprising as the failure of the growing urbanization of the world to be reflected in a parallel growth in the importance of the urban factor in military science."⁹

Doctrinal Issues

Neither the U.S. Army's nor the U.S.M.C.'s tactical doctrine on urban warfare fit well into joint and U.S. Army's operational concepts. The marine manual on urban warfare explains the importance of urban terrain to strategy: "the side which controls an urban area has a decisive psychological advantage that frequently determines success or failure of larger conflicts."¹⁰ The rest of the document then addresses the relationship of urban terrain to tactical combat. There are numerous reasons for the importance of urban areas to tactical combat, but how those same considerations interplay with operational level warfighting is not explored.¹¹ The most current army urban combat manual contains a small number of considerations regarding the importance of cities and presents the commander with some lists of when and why forces should attack or defend in urban terrain.¹² These lists contain

both operational and tactical considerations but do not delineate between the levels of warfare better capable of analyzing specific problems.

The U.S. Army's doctrine for urban warfare centers predominantly on the tactical problems of urban combat. There are four stated reasons for why battles in urban areas usually occur. Any reason or combination of reasons can apply: a city is between two natural obstacles and there is no bypass, the city contributes to the attainment of an overall objective, the city is in the path of a general advance and cannot be surrounded or bypassed, finally, political and humanitarian concerns require seizure or retention of the city.¹³ The army's basic document on urban warfare (Field Manual 90-10, Military Operations In Urban Terrain) addresses the problem from a tactical point of view and has an undercurrent of foreboding with regard to the cost of urban battle.¹⁴ The current U.S. military is simply not big enough to fight an extensive and expensive urban battle. The battle of Stalingrad was a conflagration that consumed 20 divisions in just over one month of tactical urban combat.¹⁵ A recourse is to establish conditions for success via distribution of resources at the operational level.

Operational thought for the U.S. Army involves the planning of campaigns and operations to achieve strategic goals and considers the implications of urban terrain when a city is important to successful completion of a campaign.

FM 100-5 recognizes the operational level of war as the link between the tactical and strategic level and that actions at the operational level strive to attain strategic goals through the conduct of campaigns and major operations.¹⁶ Commanders at the operational level coordinate air, land, sea, and space forces.¹⁷ Achieving operational results is done by tying tactical battles and engagements to strategic aims.

Current U.S. Army thought on the operational level of war and its link to tactical urban warfare is, at best, disjointed. Urban terrain is viewed as a condition in which military forces must operate and is further discussed as a physical dimension of the combat environment. A discussion on geography includes types operations with regard to terrain: desert, mountain, jungle, cold weather, and urban.¹⁸ Army doctrine recognizes urban terrain as the only terrain condition that can exist in any of the other geographical environments but again there is no examination of the compounding implications of this statement.¹⁹

Tactical level combat and operational actions differ with regard to modern warfighting technology and combat in and around a city. The tactical fighting within an urban area poses the same types of problems regardless of the geographical environment surrounding the urban terrain. Modern tactical innovations are usually modifications of procedures adopted in city combat during World War II regardless of current technologies. The possible influence

of geographical environments on technology at the operational level and its relationship to urban terrain can affect the operational operating systems differently. Huge expanses of terrain and an ability to control events in time and space are a part of operational level warfare.²⁰ Extensive urban terrain serves to condense operational level actions because of the restrictive nature of the geography. Such areas also tend to expand the time required to complete operations. Current technology which has had little effect on the course of tactical urban combat can considerably influence operational conditions. Combat operations in the surrounding geographical environment and its influence on how units enter the urban terrain is important.

The Operational Operating Systems

Joint and combined forces achieve success in a campaign or major operation by using the six systems as analytical guides.²¹ Each of the operating systems has subfunctions. When these subfunctions are successfully completed, the major operating system is fully addressed.

Joint operations and joint doctrine at the operational level of war do not consider the effects of combat on urban operational warfighting. The joint planners' task of synchronizing joint forces to establish positive operational conditions for tactical urban combat requires a thorough understanding of environmental effects. The planner and commander must understand how the enemy intends to

incorporate the urban terrain into their strategy for the conflict. The U.S. military may have no choice but to commit operational forces to defeat enemy forces in an urban area. The urban battlefield is chosen by the defender, but the attacker still has the option of establishing conditions prior to tactical engagements.

Joint forces contain the power to establish operational conditions that precede tactical success in urban combat. The systems interrelate and have a synergistic affect on any tactical combat operation and a neglect of them prior to tactical urban combat could doom the operation before the first tactical action begins. The same general considerations for target engagement, smaller unit actions, communications, and mobility which hamper tactical level urban combat operations have similar, yet more dramatic affects on the outcome of the battle at the operational level. The six operational operating systems are defined in the following paragraphs.

Operational maneuver and movement encompasses administrative and tactical disposition of forces to create a decisive impact on the conduct of a campaign or major operation by either securing the advantages of position before battle occurs or exploiting tactical success.²² The concept includes operational mobility for friendly formations and countermobility to delay, channel or stop enemy operational forces. "Maneuver and movement can be on

sea, land or air."²³ A portion of operational deception is included in movement and maneuver.

Operational fires include the attack of land, air, and sea targets to achieve an operationally significant objective. They are designed to have a significant impact on the campaign.²⁴ "Operational fires are not fire support, and an operational maneuver does not necessarily depend on such fires."²⁵ Operational fires are planned from the higher-headquarters to lower headquarters.²⁶ Tactical fire support is planned at the lower headquarters with coordination made at higher headquarters.

Operational intelligence is the collection, processing, and dissemination of information concerning operationally significant military and nonmilitary factors.²⁷ It is the intelligence that is required to conduct operations in the theater or area of operations. Operational intelligence must be broad and encompassing to assess adequately the enemy's operational as well as tactical capabilities.²⁸

Operational support is the sustainment of friendly forces in campaigns and major operations within the theater or area of operation. The system includes civil-military and enemy prisoner of war operations.²⁹ Support starts at theater sustaining bases and passes through major forward combat service support (CSS) units and ends with the CSS of large tactical formations.³⁰ Operational support links strategic sustainment to tactical CSS, is almost always a joint operation, and may be a combined operation.³¹

Operational command and control is the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned operational forces in the accomplishment of the mission.³² This function contains the high-level leadership and management abilities which arrays forces properly to accomplish missions. Command and control at the operational level is often joint and frequently is a combined operation.

Operational protection is the preservation of friendly force from hostile operational maneuvers, fires, intelligence and natural occurrences. The emphasis is on conservation of the fighting force while that force is maneuvering to apply its strength at a decisive time and place.³³

Establishing the conditions for tactical victory at the operational level of war is a major factor in urban warfare. Execution within the joint operational framework is key. German execution of the battle of Stalingrad provides an example of how poor operational preparation prior to tactical combat can doom combatants. The German Sixth Army under General von Paulus attacked Stalingrad in the summer of 1942. Hitler, and subsequently Stalin, made the battle for Stalingrad the ultimate test of wills. The Germans never isolated Stalingrad operationally, but attempted to seize the city by direct assault. Russian *operational movement, maneuver and support* were used in executing the city's tactical defense. Tactical level fighting evolved

into a continuous attrition of each sides units because of the steady stream of unhindered Russian resources into the city. The German Air Force, under Feldmarshall Herman Goering, provided close air support to the army. German artillery units fired almost exclusively in support of the forces in combat within the city. The dedication of almost all German fires to the tactical fight neglected the *operational fires* essential to support of tactical fighting. Although German artillery was used to deny the Russians the ability of crossing the Volga River, the proximity of the crossing sites to the major engagements made them a part of the tactical action.

Operational intelligence was an additional German weakness throughout the battle. The Luftwaffe was not successful in gathering operational intelligence west of the Volga. The German Army did not attempt to conduct any ground intelligence gathering missions west of the river; the Germans consequently underestimated the strength of a major operational Russian build-up.

The German tactical situation became worse as the campaign continued because of eroding operational conditions. City fighting in Stalingrad had caused each German division to culminate in their offensive capability, but not in their defensive capability. The Sixth Army headquarters controlled ground forces fighting in and around Stalingrad while the theater German Air Force headquarters controlled the air effort. The Russian Army commander,

General Georgi Zhukov, planned and conducted a major offensive that encircled the German Sixth Army. His isolation of the city is striking in contrast to German failures. Two Russian army groups, one in the north and the other in the south, denied further reinforcement of the Germans when they linked-up west of the city. The German Air Force attempted to resupply the Sixth Army by air, but the long route and Russian air defense artillery positioned along the air corridor, severely hampered German logistics efforts. German command and control remained intact after the encirclement; however, the isolation of Sixth Army from its higher headquarters placed a strain on the communications links between the two headquarters. Russian success came when the exhausted Sixth Army surrendered en masse.³⁴

Battlespace and Urban Terrain

The 1993 version of the U.S. Army's chief doctrinal manual, Field Manual 100-5 (Operations), introduces the concept of battlespace as a guide for large-unit commanders.³⁵ Battlespace is a three-dimensional sphere that surrounds the operational commander's areas of operations and interest, then extends to include the joint force sea and air component's areas. Battlespace incorporates the dimensions of width, height, depth, and time. This concept will help facilitate the understanding

of how urban terrain impacts the operational level considerations.

The major impact of urban terrain on battlespace is the compressed nature of the urban battlefield. "Operational depth in a predominantly rural environment is likely measured in the tens or hundreds of kilometers; in a city, such depth could be single digit numbers of kilometers or several city blocks."³⁶ Urban terrain may also have a funneling effect on large units acting around the periphery.³⁷ Engaging and interdicting enemy forces in the city have a different character than do operations in other geographical environments because of reduced ranges for observation and firing.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

Three historical examples demonstrate the influence of the operational level on tactical urban combat. The six operational operating functions provide a the framework for analyzing the relationship between the operational and tactical levels. The conditions established by the operational commander and their effects on subsequent tactical combat in cities offer insights into the decisions and activities operational commanders and staffs should consider before commencing battle. There is a conscious effort to use battles which involve both general war and OOTW to uncover any possible consistencies between the intensity of war and operational actions for urban warfare.

Inchon-Seoul

Acclaimed as an operational stroke of genius by military historians, Operation "Chromite" was the U.S. invasion of the South Korean port of Inchon. The U.S. X Corps, a force composed of United States Army, marine and Republic of Korea (ROK) units, landed at the port of Inchon and attacked to liberate the capital city of Seoul. Although there was no established timeline for the liberation of Seoul, the theater commander, General MacArthur, thought the action would be done in five days. The X Corps commander, General Almond, thought the operation would take ten days.³⁸

The Eighth U.S. Army, Korea (EUSAK) executed a difficult delaying action from south of Seoul to a pocket around the port city of Pusan. The North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA) attacked to push United Nations forces off the Korean Peninsula before significant reinforcements arrived. General MacArthur, as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, believed a major amphibious operation in the center of Korea would stop the North Korean advance. MacArthur envisioned the Inchon operation as early as 22 July, 1950, one month after the start of the war.³⁹ X Corps began extensive planning for Operation "Chromite" in mid-August with the major amphibious operation scheduled for September.⁴⁰

The landing caught the NKPA completely by surprise. MacArthur declared Seoul secure on September 26, but major

resistance did not end until the 29th⁴¹, fifteen days after the Inchon landing. Mopping up in the Seoul area continued into October.⁴² The operation was a success by any standard of measure; however, obtaining operational success was more costly in resources and time than expected because of the extensive battle for control of Seoul.

X Corps consisted of two divisions, one separate airborne regiment, a marine air group, a naval bombardment group, and carrier aviation. The ground forces were involved in the maneuver to seize Inchon and Seoul. The 1st Marine Division conducted the initial landing and subsequently moved to Kimpo airfield and the Han river. The ROK 17th Infantry Regiment was the first unit scheduled to enter the South Korean capital; the entrance to Seoul was planned as an unopposed liberation. The 7th Infantry Division(ID) was scheduled to land administratively after the marines had pushed inland to the Han River west of Seoul. The 7th Division's primary mission was to protect the X Corps' right flank and allow for flexibility to expand the beachhead "to as far south as Osan if necessary."⁴³ The 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team was to act as the operational reserve.⁴⁴

The Far East Air Force (FEAF) and naval air from aircraft carriers were responsible for deep targets away from the landing area. From the 23rd to the 26th of September, as the 1st Marine Division pushed to the Han River and the city of Seoul, X Corps directed combat sorties

east of Seoul. Air units from FEAf, naval, and marine air attacked NKPA combat and support units moving into Seoul from the northeast and east, destroying large numbers of enemy troops and equipment.⁴⁵ The U.N. had complete air superiority and air sorties ranged freely over NKPA forces during daylight hours. Air interdiction by naval air was more responsive and consequently the most valuable as a source of *operational fires*. Interrogation of captured NKPA officers revealed that naval air was the U.N. arm that was most damaging to uncommitted NKPA forces. MacArthur also directed the FEAf to attack NKPA *operational support* structures. NKPA logistics and essential points on their lines of communications were attacked continuously. Once the fighting entered the city, most of the sorties were directed at targets in support of ground unit actions within the city.⁴⁶

A failure in U.N. *operational intelligence* led to an unexpected and prolonged urban battle for Seoul. The theater's intelligence community estimated that the "enemy was incapable of organizing additional combat divisions of the standard engaging EUSAK"⁴⁷ in the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula. Intelligence further stated that the enemy could only reinforce actions at Inchon and Seoul with provisional regimental combat teams, brigades or defensive commands. The major assumption was that any significant forces the enemy tried to commit had to come from reserve divisions around EUSAK.⁴⁸ U.N. intelligence officers did

not know that the NKPA strategic reserves were east of Seoul and moving south to fight EUSAK when the Inchon invasion was launched. This force consisted of the newly formed 18th Division and four independent infantry regiments with approximately 20,000 NKPA soldiers.⁴⁹ Failure to detect and interdict the NKPA cost the X Corps considerable casualties in tactical combat in and around Seoul.

Analyzing the Seoul campaign reveals operational strengths and weaknesses. *Operational command and control* for the operation has always been the subject of controversy. EUSAK and X Corps could not support each other in their separate missions. The X Corps was a separate command and took orders directly from MacArthur. EUSAK would assume command once X Corps liberated Seoul. Although representatives of the Far East Air Force (FEAF) were on MacArthur's staff, the major planners were still in Japan where most of the operational air missions originated. The distance of this command and control structure from the battle area caused delays in *operational fires* on enemy units east of Seoul.

Operational support was primarily dependent on resupply from sea transports and then aerial resupply as major airfields were freed. The X Corps established its support system on the 21st, after the 7th ID had come ashore but before the attack on Seoul. The corps resupply of frontline units and movement of follow-on units to Seoul from the Inchon area was on a refurbished railline.⁵⁰ This system

provided ample lift for the quantity of supplies needed to fight an urban battle and at no time did enemy actions threaten the logistics effort.

Coordinated tactical actions of units provided *operational protection*. Both marine and army units moved in small combined arms teams of infantry, armor, engineers, and artillery. X Corps positioned large units to facilitate force protection. The 187th Airborne Regiment and the 31st Regiment, 7th ID, respectively defended the northern and southern flanks of the attack on the city.⁵¹ U.N. Air superiority negated any need for air defense.

NKPA forces were forced to move only at night because of U.N. *operational fires*; however, a large number of intact units managed to enter Seoul and move beyond the city towards advancing U.N. forces.⁵² The 1st Marine Division started the battle for Seoul when they made contact with the NKPA 18th Division during their final push to the Han River. The action began in a suburb of Seoul called Yongdong'po. The fighting from this point became an intense battle for barricades, key terrain, and buildings as the marines pushed towards Seoul.⁵³ The marines made three attempts to cross the Han River in the city of Seoul. The initial attempt at a river crossing on the 19th was repelled with heavy losses because of insufficient combat power. Subsequent crossings used significant reinforcements and support to ensure success.⁵⁴ The second major attempt on the 24th used massive fires to establish a supporting position for the

final and main landing on the 25th.⁵⁵ Each attempt, except for the first, incorporated overwhelming tactical firepower.

The operational conditions established before the Inchon invasion gave the U.N. forces many advantages. However, the U.N. forces did not benefit from these advantages in their attack on Seoul. The major assumption was that the capital would fall without a battle; operational planning therefore did not include consideration of determined enemy resistance. *Operational fires* and *operational maneuver* were executed prior to the amphibious operation. The FEAF conducted air attacks against the NKPA line of communications east of Seoul. The navy and marine forces conducted raids and feints along the coasts of the Korean Peninsula. These attacks confused the NKPA.⁵⁶ The failure to detect the movement of two NKPA division equivalents from North Korea to positions east of Seoul was an *operational intelligence* shortfall. The NKPA forces that entered Seoul were their strategic reserves. The attack on Seoul became a direct assault at the tactical level with no favorable operational conditions except for *operational fires* which forced the NKPA to move at night.

Panama City

Operation "Just Cause" in 1991 was essentially the struggle to win a conflict by controlling one city. The Panamanian leader, Manuel Noriega, had established a political climate that was overtly hostile to U.S. citizens.

Noriega's direct involvement in illegal drug trafficking contributed to a situation wherein only direct military action would stop him. To facilitate surprise and simultaneity in the action, a major airlift supported the operation. Planned as a *coup d'main*, the operational concept encompassed violent components directed at neutralising key components of Noriega's power structure. These actions would result in the toppling of the existing Panamanian government. There was a movement of over 7,000 soldiers on D-day from six U.S. bases in the.⁵⁷ Within 48 hours of the start of the operation, Panama City was under the control of U.S. forces.

The conflict was one violent operation with numerous, interconnected components. Movement and maneuver for Operation Just Cause were precisely orchestrated operational actions. The operation had no less than eleven major elements and subordinate commanders further subdivided their units prior to the start of the operation.⁵⁸ Movement to the theater by many of the combat forces was by direct airlift from the continental United States. Other units were in Panama prior to hostilities and still other units were transported by sealift to their objectives. Maneuver was conducted in one of three ways. Units prepositioned in Panama used air assault operations or short tactical ground moves to approach their objectives. Units from CONUS conducted airborne insertions or landed at Howard Air Force

Base. Those units then either air assaulted or conducted tactical ground moves to their assigned areas of operation.

Panama City and the Panamanian government were isolated from their military by numerous U.S. forces acting in unison. Units from the 193rd Inf Bde in an air assault and a Ranger Battalion in an airborne assault attacked the largest concentrations of Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) forces nearest Noriega.⁵⁹ The Ranger's objective was to seal the city from the south. A navy special operations unit captured Paitilla airfield on the eastern edge of Panama City to deny Noriega a quick getaway. An additional ranger battalion parachuted into a PDF barracks called Rio Hato to neutralize the forces most loyal to Noriega.⁶⁰ Army special forces soldiers seized a bridge over the Pacura River east of Panama City while U.S. Marines captured the bridge that controls the route which crosses the Panama Canal and entered Panama City from the west.⁶¹ The city was isolated by operational maneuver; the attack of selected PDF units denied the enemy any opportunity to respond effectively.

Operational fires were provided by three systems types; air force fighter aircraft, attack helicopters, and AC-130 gunships.⁶² The Commander, Joint Task Force Panama, had control of these resources during the initial phases of the operation for forces already in Panama; this authority was shifted to Joint Task Force, South as the assault began. Operational fires were designed to isolate and fix PDF

forces before combat units arrived.⁶³ The nearest battalion commander or above approved the use of any large caliber direct or indirect fire in populated areas once the battle started. Air fires were planned to neutralize, destroy or disrupt PDF forces, command, control and communications; and key military facilities and executed on order.⁶⁴

A continuous U.S. presence in Panama since 1903 gave the U.S. near perfect intelligence on Panamanian forces.⁶⁵ In October 1990, Major Moises Giroldi, the Panamanian Defense Force Chief of Security, led a coup attempt against the Noriega regime. Although this attempted overthrow failed, the actions taken by PDF forces remaining loyal to Noriega provided the last essential shred of intelligence: the actions of the PDF forces during the coup telegraphed their movements during a conflict.⁶⁶

Operational command and control of Just Cause was in line with contemporary U.S. military joint doctrine. Initially, Commander, U.S. Army South (USARSO) was the acting commander of all Joint Task Force South (JTFSO) forces in Panama. JTFSO was the senior warfighting headquarters in the operation. The 18th Airborne Corps commander assumed the role of Commander, JTFSO upon arrival in the joint operations area.⁶⁷ The Commander, USARSO assumed the role of deputy commanding general for JTFSO.

The operation's logistics were the responsibility of USARSO. USARSO provided support for JTFSO as the designated theater army support structure.⁶⁸ Most of the supplies

required for the anticipated duration of the fighting were carried by the units. Any additional supplies came from prepositioned war reserve and were issued as required.⁶⁹ The movement of supplies from facilities in Panama to units operating in and around Panama City posed major problems. The area of operations encompassed a nonlinear battlefield. Convoy movement required security. Although this action is present in any other form of warfare, the planners of Just Cause deliberately placed U.S. forces in separate pockets. The OPLAN addressed the helicopter slingloading of supplies as a quick method to circumvent this problem.⁷⁰ As with the intelligence system, years of established U.S. presence facilitated *operational support* requirements via the stockpiling of supplies.

Force protection was an integral part of the operation. Each unit involved in the operation was given a list of installations and functions which were essential to supporting the operation and preserving the force.⁷¹ Units secured Howard Air Force Base, a base essential to follow-on forces.⁷² 82nd and 7th ID units seized the electrical power station for Panama City, the Madden Dam and the Gamboa prison where U.S. and political prisoners were held.⁷³ This action denied the PDF any means of gaining leverage against U.S. forces through the threatening of civilians. There were approximately 2,500 soldiers scheduled to arrive in Panama on the second day of operations. Most of these were

MPs trained in security and crowd control, units essential to force protection in an urban area.⁷⁴

The operational conditions established before the initial engagements placed the U.S. forces in extremely favorable positions. Near perfect operational and tactical intelligence enhanced operational advantages by eliminating or confining uncertainty to possible and probable PDF responses to U.S. actions. The problem for U.S. planners was simplified. Each of the tactical objectives assigned to the different U.S. forces was seized according to the overall plan. Viewing the area of operations as a continuum and planning separate, but mutually supporting, engagements ensured a timely dismantling of the enemy's capabilities.

U.S. forces achieved surprise quickly and early in the operation. Surprise was the key to operational planning for Just Cause. Isolation of PDF forces from one another and their command and control drastically reduced unit effectiveness. Operational fires acted to confuse and neutralize the PDF. U.S. operational actions stripped the PDF of any initiative. The PDF resorted to donning civilian attire, operating in small bands, and conducting guerilla warfare in Panama City. The PDF did not have the forces or support to sustain this guerilla activity. These PDF irregulars were eventually eliminated.

Mogadishu

Operation Restore Hope was the U.S. action under U.N. sponsorship to restore order in a country ravaged by anarchy. The U.N. name for the action was U.N. Operations Somalia (UNOSOM I). The peacekeeping operation was conducted from late 1992 to 1994. The ultimate purpose was to provide a security umbrella which would help reestablish an infrastructure within the country to halt the thousands of deaths from starvation.

The U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division airlanded in Mogadishu on 13 December 1992 to begin peacekeeping operations in Somalia.⁷⁵ U.S. forces accompanied other U.N. forces and secured relief distribution sites in Humanitarian Relief Sectors(HRS). These operations continued from December, 1992 to February, 1993 for all combined forces. The HRSs remained as command and control boundaries for the duration of the operation. U.N. forces also provided support and security for non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁷⁶

U.N. forces conducted operations to secure their areas and were in a defensive posture because of the nature of the operation. During these operations the tactical emphasis was to uncover and seize weapons caches and encourage Somalis to turn in their weapons.⁷⁷ The Somali population initially viewed the U.N. coalition as a stabilizing force. U.S. forces secured their areas by establishing security

checkpoints and defensive positions. The emphasis was entirely on *operational protection*.

Incidents gradually increased during the first two months of the operation. U.S. and other forces conducted a series of air assault operations to secure small towns and key points in the vicinity of Mogadishu to deny the warring factions freedom of movement. Small tactical engagements continued throughout the month of January. Two incidents were significant. The first U.S. death occurred when a sniper killed a U.S. soldier.⁷⁸ A flight of AH-1 attack helicopters destroyed a convoy of technicals (a civilian trucks modified to carry large weapons) moving into the southern town of Kismayo.⁷⁹ The first incident represented the vulnerability of U.N. personnel to random acts of violence. The second incident showed U.S. firepower countering any major attempts by warring factions to enter restricted areas. Each of the major population centers were isolated from factional influence by a compilation of firepower and security measures.

The pace of events increased throughout February as the U.S. forces began redeployment back to the United States and other U.N. forces assumed control. The operational isolation and protection of population centers eroded. As the U.S. began to draw down, a Somali faction under Colonel Morgan seized the city of Kismayo. No U.N. forces were in the city. Heavy fighting broke out with another faction commanded by Colonel Jess, an ally of Aideed.⁸⁰ General

Arnold, the U.S. Army forces commander, gave Col. Morgan an ultimatum to leave Kismayo the next day. Morgan agreed to withdraw from Kismayo on the 25th, but different hostile actions in Mogadishu wounded four marines in that same 24 hour period.⁸¹ Aideed was blamed for the attacks by the U.N. However, the decrease of incidents indicated the situation had actually stabilized.⁸² The opposing Somali factions slowly formed into a loose coalition under Aideed's control.

The U.N. eventually indentified Aideed as the largest obstacle to success and U.S. military operations concentrated on his capture. The U.N. operations reduced Aideed's influence by slowly disarming his forces and driving them away from the Somali population centers.⁸³ This series of operations forced Aideed's forces out of Mogadishu and into the suburbs. Aideed countered these actions by ambushing a Pakistani infantry unit on 6 June 1993, killing 24 Pakistani soldiers and injuring many more. The U.N. reacted by declaring a resolution to arrest and detain those responsible for punishment.⁸⁴ This event heralded the beginning of UNOSOM II as the emphasis of the U.N. operation changed to peace enforcement.

The scope of the overall crisis had changed entirely for the U.S and the addition of U.S. special operations units signalled a distinct change in U.S. intent. Strike operations began immediately with Aideed as the target. These missions did not end until the special operations

units lost a a costly firefight in the suburbs of Mogadishu. This failed engagement is best analyzed by the six operating systems.

Sea and airlift was the means of *operational movement* to the theater. Most units' equipment arrived by sea while personnel arrived by air.⁸⁵ The initial entry of the U.S. Marines was an assault landing as a show of force to the warring factions in Somalia. A series of air assaults and ground tactical moves were the initial maneuvers to seize key locations in the city and surrounding countryside. These operations were quick, decisive, unopposed. They established U.S. operational dominance in the area. The rapid control of the city gained by U.N. forces acted as a catalyst to compel the two major warring factions to agree to an armistice two days after the operation started.

Attack helicopters and AC-130 gunships conducted fires in support of UNOSOM II. Only two examples of *operational fires* occurred during UNOSOM I OR II. In UNOSOM I attack helicopters destroyed the technicals to keep them out of the city. During UNOSOM II, AC-130 fires were used on Aideed's headquarters to force him into surrendering. Commanders were judicious in their use of these systems because of the two U.N. charters and potential collateral damage. Marine attack air assets were for close support and were not used because of strict rules of engagement. *Operational fires* were used only to control Aideed's actions.⁸⁶

Operational intelligence which had tactical value was minimal throughout the operation. The environment was initially deemed as nonthreatening to operational units because the type of weapons the Somali factions possessed. Almost all real-time intelligence which could be useful to operational and tactical commanders was from human sources (HUMINT). Information was usually obtained by bribing Somalis and was at times of questionable reliability.

The U.S. Marine Corps provided *operational command and control* during UNOSOM I. During UNOSOM I, *command and control* was transferred to the U.S. 10th Mountain Division commander and who remained the army forces commander throughout UNOSOM II. The special operations units which operated in Somalia were under a separate command and control structure with a requirement to coordinate with other army units as required.

Operational support for Restore Hope was extremely difficult for the duration of the operation. The entire theater of operations was an austere environment. The Somali infrastructure had completely collapsed and all logistics had to be transported into the country by sea or air. Further transport was done by convoy and, like Operation Just Cause, U.N. forces provided convoy security. The ports and airfields required a major overhaul to allow the receipt of the large amounts of resources required to conduct operations.

Operational protection translated into tactical security actions for every aspect of the operation. Operational level threats from the Somalis were nonexistent. U.S. forces discovered that U.S. rear area security operations doctrine had the best methods for conducting continuous peacekeeping activities. Each U.S. unit, regardless of its particular mission, had to maintain the capability of defending itself for a short duration. The operational commander did establish a centrally located quick reaction force(QRF) which was capable of moving to a trouble spot by either air assault or ground movement. The QRF was instrumental in assisting the withdrawal of the special operations forces on 3 October after the raid encountered determined resistance.

Task Force Ranger arrived in Mogadishu in August to conduct combat operations against Aideed. The force included approximately 16 helicopters from Task Force 160(army special operations aviation), a company of Rangers and a Delta force unit.⁸⁷ The task force conducted numerous operations with mixed results because they were not coordinated with other U.N. forces. Their primary method of operation was sudden and aggressive air assault raids capitalizing on surprise. The element of surprise was eventually lost because the force had established an identifiable pattern.⁸⁸ On October 3, the Somalis caught TF Ranger in an ambush based on a simple tactical drill. A combination of rocket launchers to counter U.S. helicopters,

a simple radio net that directed small irregular forces to one location and an urban setting were the basic ingredients to their plan.⁸⁹ Although the Somalis suffered considerable casualties, the number of U.S. casualties and an unaccomplished mission mitigated against continued U.S. popular support.

The operational conditions established before the major tactical engagements did not set any preconditions to facilitate successful tactical operations for TF Ranger. The emphasis on operational maneuver and protection during UNOSOM I denied the warring factions everything except the most minor opportunities. When UNOSOM II had started, a large number of the U.S. combat units had departed Somalia, giving control of major portions of the city back to a Somali coalition. The Somalis had a respite from the pressure placed on them by the U.N. forces capturing weapons and ammunition caches, denying access to key locations, and separating the warriors from the population. During this time the factions under Aideed's control rearmed, resupplied, and reorganized.⁹⁰ Aideed's forces also moved back into unoccupied sections of the city to regain control over the civilian population.

In Mogadishu, the U.S. attempted a *coup d'main* by eliminating the Somali leader with a relatively small special operations unit. The operation was an economy of force measure which was a gamble without the operational infrastructure which existed previously. TF Ranger had

immense mobility and an obvious advantage in superior weaponry, high technology systems, and extensive training. The Somalis had limited mobility, antiquated weaponry, low technology equipment, and militia soldiers. The urban terrain acted to equalize the antagonists in all of the aforementioned aspects. TF Ranger operated in a dangerous manner considering the dissipation of previously established favorable operational conditions.

CONCLUSION

Operational level conditions that assist or hinder the tactical level battle in urban terrain have both subtle and obvious elements. Operational isolation of an urban area is critical to success. *Enemy operational support* for tactical units within the city are severely hampered. Command and control structures designed to control forces over large expanses of terrain may be woefully inadequate in urban settings.

Leaders can use the six operating systems to establish conditions for tactical urban combat. Their use can reduce tactical level dilemmas by eliminating or containing potential problems. Lack of planning, with respect to any one of the six systems can threaten the outcome of the operation. *Operational intelligence* allows the commander to plan and execute with greater certainty and to continue actions that maintain the initiative both outside and within the urban environment. *Operational movement, maneuver, and*

fires isolate enemy forces from each other within the city and outside of the city. These functions can impede enemy movement and maneuver through either a physical presence or a destructive activity. This isolation has a direct effect on enemy *operational support*, an element which is crucial for anyone trying to sustain urban combat. *Operational protection* denies the enemy the chance to interfere with friendly movement, maneuver, fires and support for the tactical urban action.

Assets normally associated with the strategic and operational levels of war are employable against targets within urban areas. Precision guided munitions are excellent for eliminating targets in urban areas. Operation Desert Storm displayed the effectiveness of long range precision weapons in separating Iraqi forces from their command and control, logistics infrastructure, and psychological support base. These weapons are normally associated with the operational level of war and are directed at both operational and strategic targets.

Numerous decisions by the operational commander affect tactical level combat actions. The operational seizure of key terrain is essential. Historical study shows that forces attempt to take cities in one, quick, decisive action before the enemy can react or evacuate the city altogether. The operational commander must decide if either of these are feasible or if he wishes to instead develop the operation by

taking sections or key locations in a city and then proceeding.

Certain actions at the operational level appear essential for success for tactical urban warfare.

Operational level isolation is the most influential contributor to tactical success. *Operational fires* directed against enemy forces which can influence the urban battle are important. The opportunity to effectively bring those fires to bear is best accomplished while the enemy forces are outside of the city. Once the enemy has entered the city, the opportunity is lost as enemy units become concealed by buildings.

The operational commander's vision of the campaign and particularly of the battle for the city will determine the importance of any one of the six operational functions. In a quick and decisive *coup d'main*, such as Panama City, the emphasis was first on intelligence, then movement and maneuver with the other functions taking subordinate roles. Many years of U.S. presence in Panama facilitated *operational support* and *intelligence*. The taking of Seoul was envisioned as a quick action. Poor *operational intelligence* placed a greater emphasis on *operational support* because of the unexpected expenditures of a lengthy city fight. *Operational fires* were used to deny enemy reinforcement of the city because *operational maneuver* did not. In urban battles, where major tactical fighting is unavoidable, the emphasis must be on *operational support*.

Urban battles are almost mathematical predictable as personnel, equipment, and resources are expended at a consistently high rate. *Operational command and control* is always important regardless of the method of urban warfare. The controlling headquarters must maintain accurate and timely unit status information to coordinate effective subsequent actions. The isolating nature of tactical urban combat, coupled with the natural ebb and flow of urban warfare, makes the development of a complete common picture extremely difficult.

Operational level actions that are successful in general war appear applicable to Operations Other Than War where urban warfare is concerned. There are particular operational conditions which frequently precede success at the tactical level of urban warfare regardless of the intensity level of the fighting. Isolation or partial isolation of urban terrain is one action that can deny the enemy or potential enemy any chance of prolonging the tactical urban fight to gain an operational advantage. *Operational fires* can serve to accentuate the effects of isolation by harassing or destroying enemy forces through attacks on their *operational command and control*, *operational fires* and *operational support* outside of cities. Once enemy forces have entered a city, they are essentially a tactical problem. *Operational protection* in and around urban terrain is best done by the most fundamental measures taken at the tactical level. Small units which adhere to

fundamental security and protection measures will ensure the protection of larger organizations.

Noncombatant casualties are part of the equation for the operational commander. Reaction to enemy action in OOTW has the lowest potential cost in noncombatant lives. OOTW is not war; civilian casualties are generally unacceptable to the U.S. public. This fact also occurs in conventional war. The operational commander has the same concerns for civilians in general war, but again the defender of a city will generally determine what destructive resources are required to defeat him. Although all rules of engagement will state minimal collateral damage, this action is extremely difficult in general war.

When operations have the six functions in a synergistic interaction on urban terrain, then the chance of partial surprise and success is greater. The number of friendly forces required to control the city is less when surprise is achieved. All three historical examples have this aspect as a common thread. Seoul and Panama City were successful because of the advantages gained through operational level surprise, although the planning for the Seoul operation did not take advantage of that initial surprise. The special operations forces at Mogadishu were acting in a tactical manner trying to achieve a strategic goal in one decisive action. The failure of the Mogadishu operation was due to the lack of favorable operational conditions and lost operational surprise.

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